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A MARBLE HEAD FROM RHODES

[PLATES II-III]

APOLLONIUS, the celebrated scholar and poet of Rhodes, describes here and there in his *Argonautica* specific works of art with such clarity and precision that some of the descriptions have been interpreted as referring to certain extant monuments.¹ In the first book of the epic the heroes are brought, on their adventure in the Argo, to the shores of the Lemnian Isle. There Hypsipyle, Queen of Lemnos, and her maidens, who had wearied of their manless state, determined in public assembly to receive the men of the Argo and repopulate their land. So the Queen's messenger was sent to summon Jason to the palace and he, responsive to the call, girded himself appropriately for the royal visit. Especially beautiful was the cloak he donned, on which were embroidered many notable scenes.² And on it, too, "was wrought deep-tressed Cytherea bearing the swift shield of Ares; and from her shoulder to the left elbow the fastening of her chiton was loosed beneath the breast; and opposite in the bronze shield her image appeared clear to the view to behold."³ A well-known statue of Aphrodite, in the Museum of Naples, found at Capua, has been associated with these words of the Rhodian poet, and the suggestion has been plausibly entertained that Apollonius is referring to the prototype of a series of works, of which the Aphrodite from Capua most nearly reproduces the original, but which with certain stylistic modifications includes also the Aphrodite from Arles in the Louvre and the Aphrodite from Melos.⁴ Therefore the head of a goddess of this type, found in the island of Rhodes itself, is an object of peculiar artistic interest, which is not les-

¹ H. de la Ville de Mirmont, *Apollonios de Rhodes et Virgile*, pp. 453 and 614. Compare Bernoulli, *Aphrodite*, p. 22.

² Apollonius Rhodius, I, 730 ff.

³ *Ibid.* I, 742-746.

⁴ Furtwängler-Sellers, *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*, p. 387. The three statues are well shown for illustrative comparison in Brunn-Bruckmann, *Denkmäler Griechischer und Römischer Sculptur*, plates 296, 297 and 298.

sened by the intrinsic beauty of the sculpture which it is the purpose of the present paper to discuss.

This head, which is illustrated on Plates II and III, was acquired by me some years ago in Rhodes, and there is no reason to doubt the vendor's word that it was found in the island. It is about two-thirds life-size, having a total height from chin to crown of 140 mm. and a width of 121 mm. measured at the widest point, between the outer fringes of the hair above the ears. The material is a marble of fine crystals, evidently Parian, of which the surface is now entirely covered by a beautiful golden patina. The head is well preserved except for a slight but sad injury to the end of the nose. The shape is pronouncedly round, with a cephalic index of 83.¹ The hair, which is divided by a broad parting on top, and bound by a narrow fillet in front, is combed low on either temple with a resultant triangular shape imparted to the brow. In fact the hair is brought unusually low upon the face and consequently the elevation of the forehead is small. The bridge of the nose is broad and firm and serves to accentuate the characteristically delicate treatment of the eyes. Too much attention can hardly be devoted to the artist's method of rendering the eye, as the eye, especially when considered with the mouth, is the touchstone of our sculptor's style. At right angles to the nasal bone the eyebrow extends in a straight line until the outer end of the eye is passed when it slightly droops above the swelling muscle of the lid. The eyes themselves are narrowed by the drawing together of the eyelids, perhaps to indicate concentration of gaze. The upper lid is marked by an emphatic extension beyond the junction with the lower at its outer end, and at the inner commissure the tear duct is carefully modeled. The lower lid is noticeable for its gracefully rounded contour which gives gentle transition from ball to lid and from lid to cheek. Extraordinarily applicable to these eyes is the description of the Petworth Aphrodite by Furtwängler, in his *Masterpieces*, to the following effect:² "The master hand is above all manifest in the surpassing beauty of the eyes, which are a veritable mirror of the soul. In this respect, too, only the Hermes of Praxiteles can stand comparison. In both we find the same rounding of the ball and the same treatment of the lids, which

¹ This figure is only approximate as the measurements in each direction must of necessity include the hair.

² Furtwängler-Sellers, *op. cit.* p. 345.

are not sharply detached from the eyeballs; the under lid is peculiarly characteristic in its exquisite delicacy, being almost imperceptibly defined against the ball and the cheek."

The distance between the eyes of the Rhodian head is broad but the nostrils are narrow and refined, with gentle modeling on either side. The full artistic appreciation of the nose is hampered by the injury it has suffered, but no great effort of the imagination is necessary for its mental restoration. It must, however, be remembered that the accidental blunting of the nose has a reciprocal effect on the appearance of the upper lip, which was made to be more or less shadowed by a longer nose. The mouth is marvelously delicate and sensitive. The lips, which are slightly parted, are forceful and living, as well as gracefully curved in every line. At their corners the use of the drill is visible but not conspicuous and especially noteworthy is the consciously harmonious transition between the lower lip and the surrounding surface of the chin.¹ The full rounded chin and the subtle modeling of the cheeks convey an impression of mature feminine beauty, which is confirmed by the noble carriage of the head upon a graceful neck.

The view of the head in profile on the left side, as shown in Figure 3B, more clearly reveals how delicately the texture of the flesh of the neck is suggested, when the casual turning of the head to the left produces illusive wrinkles in the skin. From this side, too, it is possible adequately to study the arrangement of the hair. The locks are combed sideways from the central parting, caught in place by a fillet that is bound low on the forehead and then brushed back from either cheek with sweeping strokes, to be fastened behind in a knot, from which several strands escape and falling rest upon the neck. The artist has striven to modify the monotonous effect of the lateral mass of this hair by introducing a raised curl in its midst, but in general the hair is not wrought with that delicacy of finish that characterizes the neck and the salient features of the face. The impression conveyed is that of a piece of work blocked out on large lines to be seen from a distance rather than rendered in detail for minute inspection.

Is it possible to name the Goddess whom this head portrays? For it will not be doubted that divinity is here suggested both in nobility of conception and in dignity of poise. The luxurious fulness of the cheeks, the delicate rotundity of the chin, the arched

¹ Furtwängler-Sellers, *op. cit.* p. 345.

bows of the lips, the soft appealing eyes are elements of ideal feminine beauty which are here combined sufficiently to characterize the Goddess of beauty and of love, and without fear of contradiction we may venture to assert that this is she

“Fair, and with all allurements amplified,
The all-of-gold made, laughter-loving Dame.”¹

Worship of Aphrodite was not popularly cultivated in the island of Rhodes, as far as available records inform us of Rhodian religion. Athena of the Lindians was, of course, the great Goddess of Rhodes, of invincible power and of world-wide fame,² but nevertheless priests of Aphrodite are named in several inscriptions³ and reference is frequently made to the Aphrodite brotherhoods, the ἀφροδισιασταί.⁴ Furthermore it will be recalled that the entire vicinage of Rhodes is redolent with the fragrance of incense burned in homage to the Goddess of Love, in nearby Cyprus, on the east, honoring the Paphian Queen, or westward at Cnidus before the all-glorious statue of Aphrodite of the Fair Winds. Moreover in Rhodes itself one of the most beautiful vases found in the excavations at Camirus is decorated with an exquisite painting of Aphrodite riding on a swan.⁵ One cannot doubt that sculptors of the Rhodian School made many statues of Aphrodite and it would not be strange if some of them had been dedicated in Rhodes.

Further evidence in support of the identification of our head and in determination of its stylistic affiliations must now be sought in the study of its artistic qualities in comparison with related works.

In the Imperial Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna is a well-preserved marble head which was purchased in Tralles, and added to the Museum collection of antiquities in 1871.⁶ It was published in 1880, with two unsatisfactory plates, by Otto Benndorf in the *Archaeologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus*

¹ Chapman, *Translation of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, ll. 109-110.

² H. Van Gelder, *Geschichte der alten Rhodier*, pp. 313 ff. Ch. Blinkenberg, *L'image d'Athèna Lindia, passim*. C. Torr, *Rhodes in Ancient Times*, pp. 74 f.

³ I.G. XII, fasc. 1, 705, 736, and according to a plausible restoration in 786.

⁴ Van Gelder, *op. cit.* p. 337.

⁵ Salzmann, *Nécropole de Camiros*, pl. 60. C. H. Smith, *Catalogue of the Greek and Etruscan Vases in the British Museum*, III, D 2, p. 389.

⁶ *Übersicht der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, p. 84.

Oesterreich.¹ It is shown in Figure 1 in full-face view on the left for purposes of comparison with the front view of the Rhodian head on the right.² The heads offer many noticeable similarities. Their shape is round, the face oval, the parting in the hair deep and broad; in front a single fillet binds the hair, which is brushed low on the forehead, and back on each side to conceal the upper part of the ear. In each case the bridge of the nose

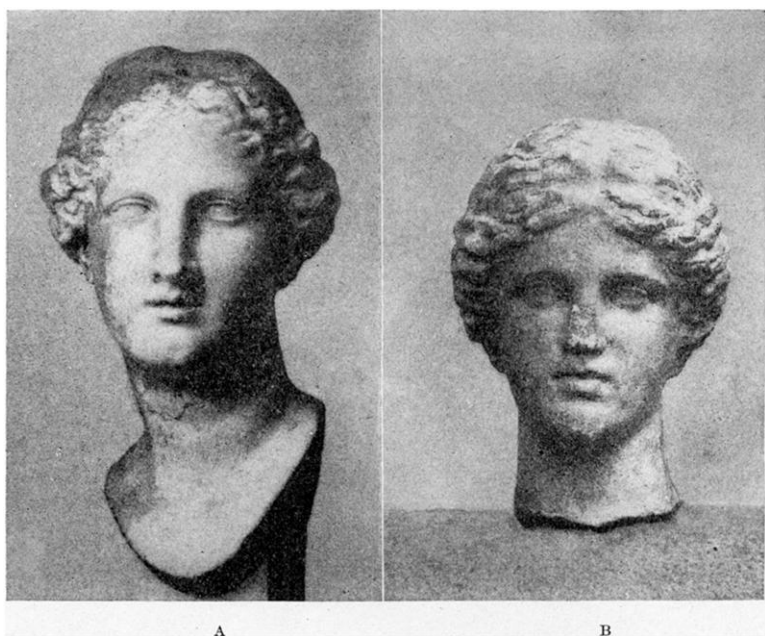


FIGURE 1.—A: HEAD FROM TRALLES; B: HEAD FROM RHODES.

is broad, the eyebrows straight, the eyes long and narrow, and the mouth small. In the Tralles head, too, the lower eyelid and the under lip are carefully modeled so as to make a pleasantly graduated transition with the adjoining surface of the skin. Further comparison of these heads from a different point of view may be profitably made by studying the picture of the Rhodian head shown in Figure 2 by the side of the reproduction of the head from Tralles given by Lucy Mitchell on Plate XIX of her *Selec-*

¹ IV, 1880, pp. 66 ff., pls. I and II.

² Professor Young, of Columbia University, kindly provided me with the photograph from which this view of the Tralles head was made.

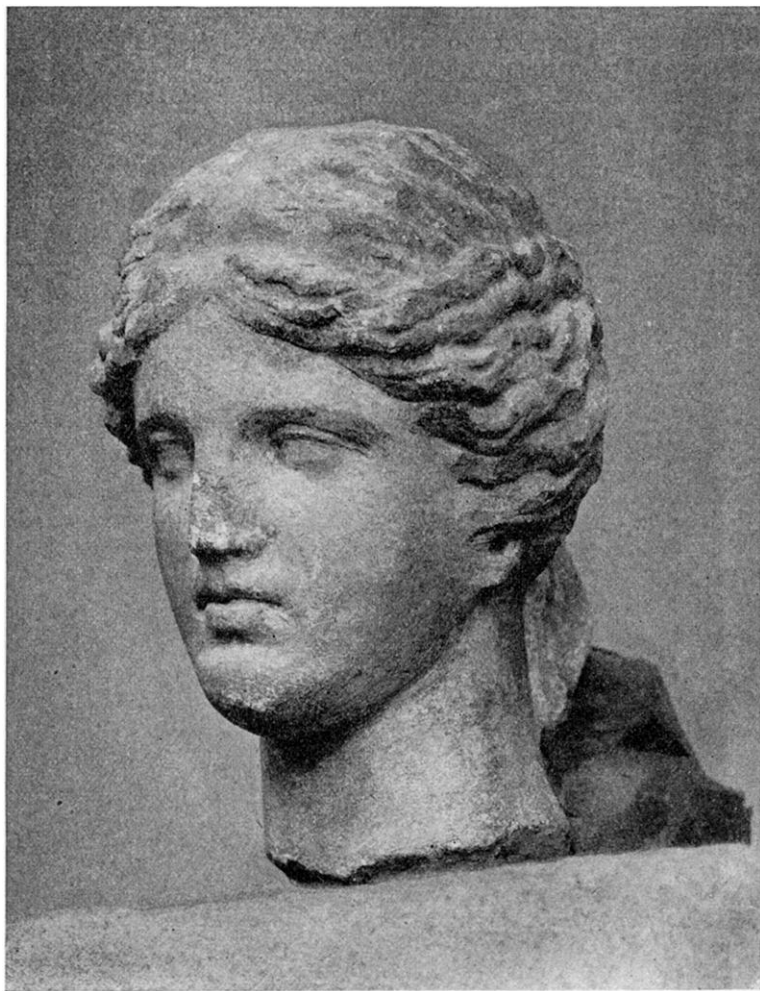


FIGURE 2.—HEAD FROM RHODES; THREE QUARTERS PROFILE.

tions from Ancient Sculpture. Indeed in this juxtaposition several differences are clearly in evidence, which are somewhat accentuated by the fact that the Mitchell photograph of the Tralles head was made from a plaster cast. Attention should be particularly directed to the hard line about the nostrils which does not exist on the Rhodian face, to the conspicuousness of the drill holes in the corners of the mouth, to the dimple in the chin, and

to the extent to which the ear is revealed by the treatment of the side hair.

Benndorf, in concluding his study of this Aphrodite head from Tralles, states¹ that in view of the outline of its profile, the accentuation of the nasal bone, the small height of the nostrils, the small mouth, the short upper lip and the dimple in the chin, it must be assigned to the same time and school which produced the Hermes of Olympia. With this opinion, too, Furtwängler in general concurs when, in the *Masterpieces*, he declares his belief that "its artist evidently imitated Praxiteles, from whom he may have been separated only by a generation or two."² In order to emphasize this relationship Lucy Mitchell³ places the head from Tralles by the side of a small marble head, found at Olympia, whose Praxitelean resemblances are energetically reiterated by Professor Treu in the third volume of the Olympia publication.⁴ Treu does not hesitate to suggest the possibility that the Olympia head is from the very hand of the master, and compares it to no disadvantage with another head from Tralles, the so-called von Kaufmann copy of the Cnidian Aphrodite.⁵ A characteristic feature of the head from Olympia is the treatment of the hair, which is left apparently in a rough, unfinished state, its finer details being suggested but not completed. This observation is also strikingly true of the Hermes of Olympia, the casual finish of whose hair is a studied means of producing beauty of effect.

The front view of the Rhodian head, when placed beside the Cnidian Aphrodite shows even more marked resemblances than were apparent in the comparison of the Olympia and the von Kaufmann heads. Particularly noticeable is the similar treatment of the eyebrows and eyes, the bridge of the nose, the sensitive nostrils, the small mouth and rounded chin. The contour of the face is almost identical, except on the forehead, which is made much lower on the Rhodian head because the hair is brought unusually far forward.

With these Praxitelean features of our head firmly established, it is now in order to study the Rhodian head comparatively in its relation to a work to which it exhibits the greatest affinity,

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 72.

² Furtwängler-Sellers, *op. cit.* p. 398.

³ *Selections from Ancient Sculpture*, pl. XIX. Compare her *History of Ancient Sculpture*, p. 599.

⁴ *Olympia*, Text, III, p. 206; Tafel LIV, Nos. 1 and 2.

⁵ *Olympia*, Text, III, p. 206.

the Aphrodite of Melos (Fig. 3). It is well known that the statue of the Melian Aphrodite is somewhat larger than life-size, the actual height being 2.038 meters. It is thus a little less than one-third larger than life. As has already been noted the Rhodian head is about one-third smaller than life, and indeed in its essential proportions it is just one-half the size of Aphrodite's head. This statement will be sufficiently substantiated by the citation of two measurements: the width of the neck of the Rhodian goddess is 65 mm., of the Aphrodite of Melos 130 mm.; the distance from the root of the nose to the furthest limit of the back hair is 145 mm. on the Rhodian head, 290 mm. on the Aphrodite of Melos. To be sure all the dimensions do not proportionately coincide with this degree of exactitude, but the only serious divergence occurs in the case of those measurements which are taken from the roots of the hair above the center of the forehead, for, as has been emphasized before, the hair of the Rhodian head is represented as growing disproportionately low upon the brow.¹

Apart, then, from the dissimilar shape of the triangulated foreheads the faces are seen to be very like if the view of the Rhodian head shown in Figure 2 is placed beside a three-quarter profile of the Aphrodite, such as that given by Mitchell on Plate XVIII. In this comparison the similarity is evident in the structure of the bridge of the nose and the eye complex. The characteristic eyebrows are identical in shape, and the upper lid of the eye extends peculiarly beyond the lower at the outer end. It must be remembered that the nose of the Aphrodite is restored and that some little restoration has also been wrought on the lips.² A hard

¹ Measurements of the Rhodian head compared with those made from a cast of the head of the Aphrodite of Melos are as follows:

	Rhodian Head	Aphrodite		Rhodian Head	Aphrodite
Chin to crown.....	140 mm.	273 mm.	Outer corner of eye to lobe of ear.....	57 mm.	112 mm.
Greatest width.....	121 "	245 "	Chin to mouth.....	30 "	57 "
Ear to ear.....	72 "	149 "	Root of hair to root of nose.....	26 "	66 "
Chin to roots of hair...	95 "	210 "	Root of hair to nostrils	57 "	133 "
Chin to root of nose...	73 "	148 "	Root of hair to inner corner of eye.....	38 "	85 "
Chin to inner corner of eye.....	61 "	129 "	Root of hair to mouth	67 "	155 "
Chin to outer corner of eye.....	64 "	138 "	Distance between inner ends of eyes.....	17 "	35 "
Thickness of neck....	65 "	130 "	Distance between outer ends of eyes.....	48 "	93 "
Corner of mouth to outer corner of eye...	37 "	76 "			
Corner of mouth to lobe of ear.....	53 "	103 "			

² Ravaisson, *La Vénus de Milo*, p. 65.

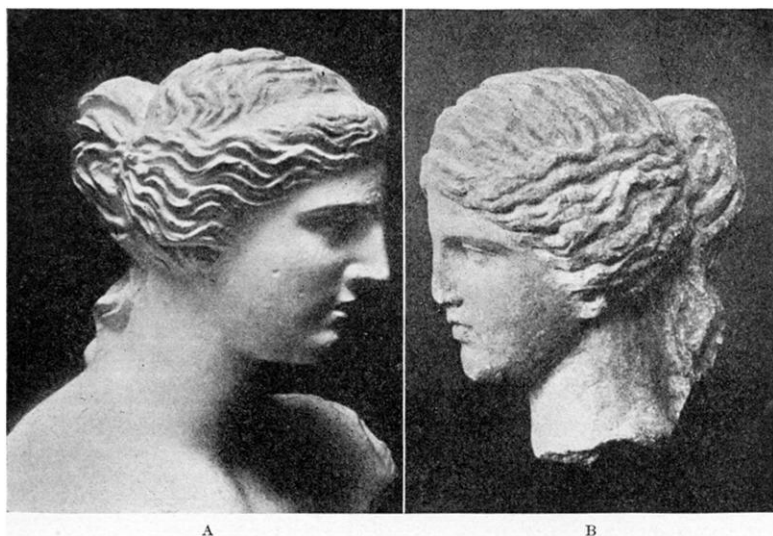


FIGURE 3.—A: HEAD OF APHRODITE OF MELOS; B: HEAD FROM RHODES.

line about the nostrils is visible here, like that noted on the head from Tralles, and the drill marks in the corners of the mouth are more noticeable than on the Rhodian example, but the contour of the chin in each case, and its modeling, show a remarkable resemblance. In the manipulation of the hair, as seen in the side view of the head in Figure 3B, the general principle of arrangement is the same, though differences in the treatment of details may be observed. The chief difference, however, is a difference of technique rather than of style, the hair of the Melian head being carefully executed and fully finished in all its details, while on the head from Rhodes the hair is handled in a very sketchy manner, without much regard for accurate articulation of the several locks. On the other hand, there is extraordinary accord between the two heads in an unusual feature of hair arrangement. The side hair on each head is brushed back over the ear to a knot behind, where it is fastened, and from this fastening three strands of hair fall down on the back neck. This characteristic manner of head-dress, together with uniformity of conception and similitude of execution, marks the two heads as very closely related. Can the nature of this relationship be more precisely determined?

Benndorf, in his study of the head from Tralles, considers that its interpretation must rest on one of two hypotheses; either it

is a free copy of the Aphrodite of Melos, or else both works go back to a common original.¹ He decides in favor of the latter alternative and assigns this supposititious original to the school, if not to the hand, of Praxiteles. Furtwängler, however, while accepting the Praxitelean character of the head thinks that it has "only quite general traits in common with the Melian statue."² Now the Rhodian head, in comparison with the Melian, does not exhibit the characteristics that might be expected to be apparent in a reduced copy. The features are too delicately and too finely finished, and the mouth, in particular, shows an evident refinement of the lines of the Aphrodite. The hair of the Rhodian head, on the contrary, is left in a comparatively rough state, apparently for purposes of contrast with the finished fineness of the features. Such a device is a familiar characteristic of Praxitelean style and has been noticed as a frequent phenomenon on heads associated with Praxiteles and his school.³ That there is, however, a distinct relationship between the Melian and the Rhodian works has been abundantly proved, and while it is hazardous to make categorical assertions about an isolated head the possibility suggested by its discovery in Rhodes cannot be avoided. It may reasonably be an independent copy, made in the fourth or third century B.C., of the prototype of the Aphrodite of Melos, which may have been dedicated in Rhodes, and there have been a familiar sight to the poet Apollonius, who takes particular pains to describe it.

But whatever view may be taken of the affiliations of our Aphrodite in the sequence of style, or whatever may be thought of her artistic valuation, the intrinsic beauty of the Rhodian head is indisputable, and we may enthusiastically apply to it the restrained words of the Greek anthologist, referring to another head in another place:⁴ "τῆλοθεν ἐκ νήσοιο Ῥόδου τέχνασμα ποθεινόν," a desirable work from the far-distant island of Rhodes.

THEODORE LESLIE SHEAR.

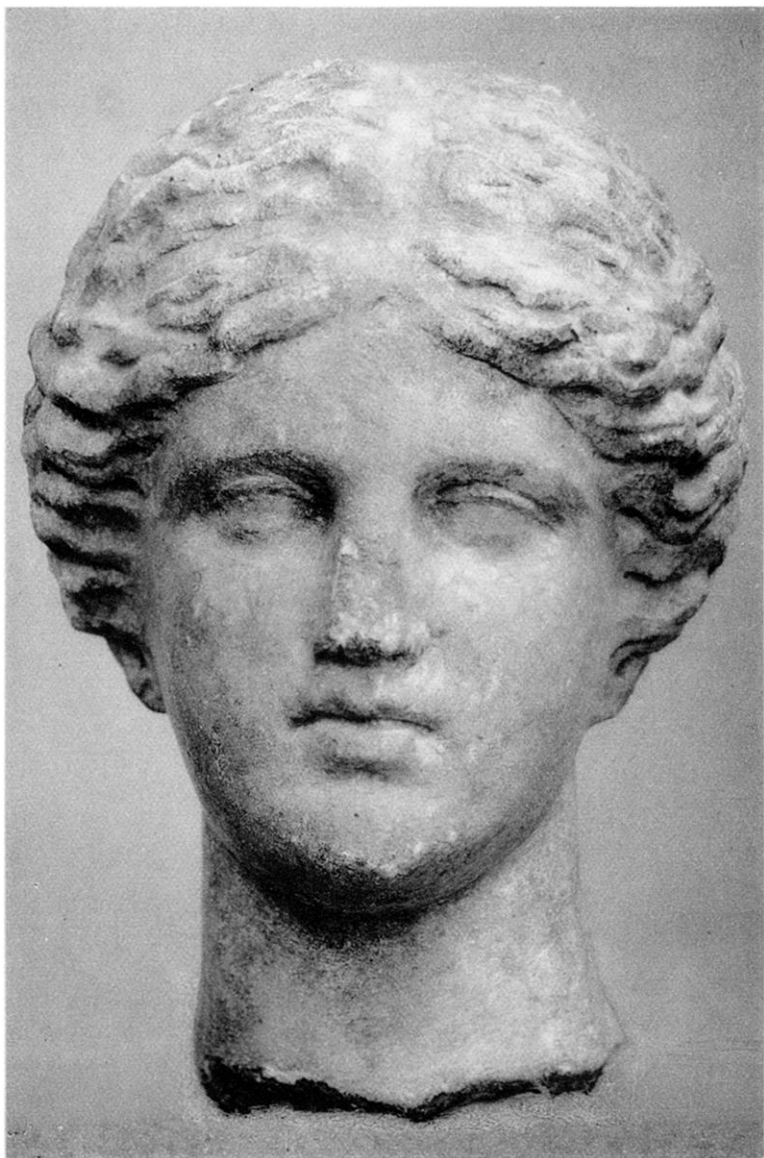
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¹ *Op. cit.* p. 70.

² *Masterpieces*, p. 398.

³ In addition to the heads already mentioned there should be compared in this connection the "Aberdeen" head in the British Museum, well shown in *Masterpieces*, pl. XVIII, and the head of a goddess in Berlin found at Pergamon, Bulle, *Der schoene Mensch*, pl. 258.

⁴ *Anth. Pal.* App. I, 317; cited by Van Gelder, *op. cit.* p. 408.



HEAD FROM RHODES: FRONT VIEW.



HEAD FROM RHODES: PROFILE.